

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 ISO-00 NEAE-00 SAA-02 SSM-03 HA-05

IO-13 CIAE-00 NSAE-00 NSCE-00 SSO-00 ICAE-00

INRE-00 SY-05 A-01 OPR-02 AID-05 PM-05 H-01

INR-10 L-03 PA-01 SP-02 SS-15 OC-06 CCO-00 SCS-06

CA-01 OMB-01 MCT-01 VO-05 /116 W

-----043471 071159Z /46

O P 071105Z JUL 78

FM AMEMBASSY BEIRUT

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 8597

INFO SIT-REP COLLECTIVE PRIORITY

USCINCEUR VAIHINGEN GER

USNMR SHAPE BELGIUM

CINCUSNAVEUR, LONDON ENG

CINCUSAFE RAMSTEIN AB GER

COMSIXTHFLT

CTF SIX ZERO

CTF SIX ONE

CTF SIX TWO

CTG SIX ZERO PT TWO

FICEURLANT NORFOLK VA

FOSIF ROTA SPAIN

DIA WASHDC

CINCUSAREUR HEIDELBERG GER

USDOCOSOUTH NAPLES IT

C O N F I D E N T I A L BEIRUT 3793

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINS, PINT, MILI, ASEC, LE, CASC

SUBJ: LEBANESE SITUATION: JULY 7, 1200 HOURS LOCAL

REF: BEIRUT 3749 (DTG 061104Z JUL 78)

1. SUMMARY. PRESIDENT SARKIS THREATENED TO RESIGN AS
ANOTHER UNEASY CEASE-FIRE WENT INTO EFFECT. PIERRE GEMAYEL
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CRITICIZED THE SYRIANS. IDF OFFICIALS CONFIRMED THAT IT WAS
ISRAELI ARICRAFT WHICH BROKE THE SOUND BARRIER OVER BEIRUT.
TWO RIVAL MILITIA GROUPS ENGAGED IN A GUN BATTLE IN THE
HAMRA AREA OF WEST BEIRUT. THERE HAVE BEEN NO REPORTED
AMERICANS INJURED IN THE BEIRUT FIGHTING SO FAR. END SUMMARY.

2. SARKIS THREATENS RESIGNATION.

PRESIDENT SARKIS THREATENED TO RESIGN ON JULY 6, SENDING SHOCK WAVES THROUGHOUT LEBANON. LEBANESE OF ALL POLITICAL PERSUASIONS, INCLUDING PHALANGE LEADER PIERRE GEMAYEL, FORMER PRESIDENT SULAYMAN FRANJIYAH, AND PROGRESSIVE SOCIALIST LEADER WALID JUMBLATT PUBLICLY APPEALED TO THE PRESIDENT TO STAY ON. THE OFFICIAL LEBANESE NATIONAL NEWS AGENCY REPORTED THAT SYRIAN PRESIDENT ASSAD HAD TELEPHONED SARKIS AND "EXPRESSED HIS WISH THAT PRESIDENT SARKIS CONTINUE TO BEAR THE RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE PRESIDENCY AND SYRIA'S READINESS TO PROVIDE LEBANON WITH ALL POSSIBLE SUPPORT." A LEADING OFFICIAL OF THE LEFTIST NATIONAL MOVEMENT TOLD EMBOFF THE PRESIDENT'S RESIGNATION WOULD PLUNGE THE COUNTRY INTO CHAOS. AS OF THE EVENING OF JULY 6 THE PRESIDENT HAS AGREED TO "FREEZE" HIS RESIGNATION.

3. UNEASY CEASE-FIRE.

ANOTHER UNEASY CEASE-FIRE WENT INTO EFFECT IN EAST BEIRUT AT ABOUT 20:30 HOURS JULY 6 AND HAS BEEN BROKEN ONLY BY SPORADIC SMALL ARMS FIRE SINCE. ON JULY 5-6 MOST OF EAST BEIRUT'S POPULATION HAD SPENT THEIR FIFTH STRAIGHT NIGHT IN BASEMENT SHELTERS WITHOUT ELECTRICITY OR WATER AND WITH THEIR FOOD STOCKS DWINDLING. THE PHALANGE VOICE OF LEBANON SAID THAT MORE THAN 1,260 ROCKETS HAD FALLEN INTO THE EAST BEIRUT AND BORDER AREAS DURING THIS TIME. THE RADIO SAID 40 BUILDINGS

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HAD CAUGHT FIRE AND SEVERAL OTHERS COLLAPSED.

4. GEMAYEL CRITICIZES SYRIANS.

IN A STATEMENT TO THE PRESS ON JULY 6 PHALANGE LEADER PIERRE GEMAYEL SAID THAT "THE EXCUSES THEY (THE SYRIANS) GAVE - THAT THESE DEEDS ARE AIMED AT HELPING LEGITIMATE AUTHORITIES ESTABLISH SECURITY - ARE NOT AT ALL CONVINCING WHEN VIEWED AGAINST THE FAILURE OF THE SECURITY FORCES CONCERNED TO ARREST THE CRIMINALS WHO ARE KIDNAPPING AND TORTURING PEOPLE IN MORE THAN ONE AREA."

GEMAYEL ALSO SAID THAT THE ATTACK ON EAST BEIRUT HAD COST THE SYRIANS THE AFFECTION AND CONFIDENCE OF THE LEBANESE - "A GREAT LOSS FOR SYRIA, WHICH AT THIS DECISIVE STAGE OF THE REGION'S HISTORY NEEDS THE FRIENDSHIP OF THE LEBANESE FIRST AND FOREMOST."

5. ISRAELI AIRCRAFT OVERFLIGHTS.

ACCORDING TO LOCAL PRESS, IDF OFFICIALS HAVE CONFIRMED THAT IT WAS ISRAELI AIRCRAFT WHICH BROKE THE SOUND BARRIER

OVER BEIRUT ON JULY 6 (SEE BEIRUT 3757). THE OVERFLIGHTS CAUSED WIDEE-SPREAD PANIC IN VARIOUS PLACES IN BEIRUT; THERE WERE ALSO RUMORS THAT THE PLANES HAD BOMBED OR STRAFED AREAS OF THE CITY, BUT THIS WAS APPARENTLY UNTRUE. ALL LOCAL PEPERS INTERPRETED THE OVERFLIGHTS AS A WARNING TO THE SYRIANS NOT TO CRUSH THE CHRISTIAN MILITIA IN EAST BEIRUT. THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE DAILY IKE CARRIED AP STORY, QUOTING THE ISRAELI DIRECTOR OF MILITARY INTELLIGENCE, MAJOR GENERAL SHLOMO GAZIT, S CONDEMNING THE "CYNICAL" -,\$ "SYSTEMATIC" ATTEMPT BY THE SYRIANS TO "IMPOST A PAX DAMASCUS ON LEBANON."

6. WEST BEIRUT INCIDENTS.

A. TWO RIVAL MILITIA GROUPS TOTALING 10 TO 15 MEN EN-
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GAGED IN A 45 MINUTE GUN BATTLE IN THE HAMRA STREET AREA OF WEST BEIRUT ON JULY 6. THERE WERE NO REPORTED CASUALTIES. THE FIGHT WAS PROBABLY OVER CONTROL OF LOCAL PROTECTION RACKETS. (MILITIAS HAVE REEMERGED ON WEST BEIRUT STREETS SINCE SYRIANS REDEPLOYED TO ATTACK POSITIONS AROUND EAST BEIRUT.)

B. AT 11:00 HOURS ON JULY 7, FOUR RIFLE ROUNDS HIT THE SEVENTH FLOOR OF THE AMERICAN EMBASSY IN WEST BEIRUT.

7. CONSULAR MATTERS.

THERE HAVE STILL BEEN NO REPORTS OF AMERICANS INJURED IN THE BEIRUT FIGHTING. VISA APPLICATIONS AT THE AMERICAN EMBASSY ARE ABOUT ONE-HALF THE USUAL VOLUME, WITH ALL THE APPLICANTS FROM WEST BEIRUT. PARKER

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